

Let's get started with our lesson. But before we get started, we'll go over some new laws and recent changes. Consider these "freebies". Once you've read through these new laws and recent changes, then we'll get started with the lesson.

## 1.1 Recent Changes

There have been some recent changes to the California traffic laws. These new laws continue to ensure our safety, updating the existing California Vehicle Code. Below are some of the most recent changes that may directly or indirectly affect you.

## New 2026 California traffic safety laws

Reminders: Cellphone Use, Expired Registration Tags, Bike Lane Move Over One Lane If, Law Enforcement Stops, Vehicles Stopping, Standing and Parking 20' From Pedestrian Crosswalk

NEW LAWS ADDED HERE...

## 1.2 Changes to Technology

In an effort to make our roads safer a collection of sophisticated technologies have been adopted over the past several years leading to new or changed driving habits. Advanced Driver Assistance Technology or Driver-Assistance Technology or Advanced Driver Assistance Systems all refer to an evolving group of in-vehicle technologies designed to provide early warnings of potential hazards on the road. Some ADAS are designed to automate certain aspects of driving (e.g., braking and steering) to enhance driver safety. Let's look at some of these features:

**Forward Automatic Emergency Braking:** This technology will warn you of a potential forward collision and will automatically apply the brakes to avoid a collision or lessen the severity of an impact if you fail to respond.

**Lane Keeping Assistance:** This technology will provide an audible or visual alert if your vehicle begins to drift into another lane. It also will provide moderate steering to help keep your vehicle in its lane.

**Adaptive Cruise Control:** This technology will automatically apply the brakes and accelerator as needed to maintain a preset speed and distance from the vehicle ahead.

**Adaptive Headlights:** This feature directs your headlights slightly in the same direction as the steering wheel when entering a curve. This projects more light onto your path of travel. It can reduce glare for oncoming vehicles when traveling at night.

**Automatic Crash Notification:** This feature can detect that a collision has occurred, and then put the vehicle in contact with an operator who can assist you or your passengers.

**Parking Assistance:** This feature controls the vehicle steering during parking. Depending on the system you have in your vehicle, either you will remain responsible for accelerating, braking and gear position, or the system will control all necessary operations.

Even though all these features can be helpful, unfortunately, many drivers think they can multitask while driving. Distracted driving is very dangerous and is one of the most common causes of collisions.

The continuing evolution of automotive technology aims to deliver even greater safety benefits and – one day – deliver automated driving systems (ADS) that can handle the whole task of driving when we don't want to or can't do it ourselves.

Since cars have changed drastically over the past ten years, driving techniques and habits have changed as well. And so, drivers have had to adapt. The techniques our parents, or even grandparents learned are very different from the ones we would learn today.

Take for instance the seat belt. Seat belts are among the most common and effective safety devices ever invented. Since their introduction, seat belts have saved countless lives and prevented many injuries. However, it didn't become a law, in the state of California, until January 1986!

It wasn't until the 1960s that American automakers began including seat belts in their cars. In 1968 the federal government mandated that all new cars include seat belts at all seating positions.



Then



Now



Then



Now

Or take the modern car's infotainment system. We used to have radios, then there were tape decks and cassette players, then CD players, and then simple LCD screens that let you connect an MP3 player to belt out your tunes. Now, most cars have a screen reminiscent of a small tablet and are capable of connecting to the internet through their own internal wifi connections, able to stream music, podcasts, and provide you with accurate, up-to-the-minute traffic reports on local roads.

### 1.3 Reason For Traffic Laws

The United States' Highway Transportation System is held up by more traffic laws than you can count. Each one has been set by a state government or the federal government, to protect the

public and maintain order on our nation's roadways. Traffic laws dictate the speed you must travel at, the maneuvers you can make, where you can and cannot drive and how you must drive in certain situations. Many laws are constant, though there are others that apply only at certain times of day or times of the year.

Traffic laws are important because they keep people safe. A motor vehicle is a dangerous and deadly weapon in the wrong hands. The safety of all road users depends on all motorists following a precise set of rules. Approximately 5 million collisions and crashes happen in America each year. In 2023, there were 37,654 fatal motor vehicle crashes, a large portion of which can be attributed to one or more drivers not obeying traffic laws.

In addition, traffic laws give a common understanding from which everyone must operate. Without traffic laws there would be a complete breakdown of organization that would result in traffic congestion and gridlock. A **Common understanding** of what the rules are gives us a pool of information from which we ALL pull from. This leads to **Keeping Order and Movement in Traffic**, which then lends itself to **Safety** on the roads.

Driving is not a game where your only options are winning or losing. Every time you step into a vehicle, hop on a bicycle or go for walk, you could risk your life. Laws allow drivers to know what to do and what to expect of other drivers. They allow drivers to anticipate the actions of other drivers and limit the number of surprises on the road.

Sometimes it feels like there are too many laws restricting what we do in the car. Occasionally, they may be an inconvenience to follow these laws. You might think to yourself, "They passed another law? Another reason I can get a ticket?" Before you even consider breaking the law however, think about why that law was passed. It's not to inconvenience you or to annoy you; rather these laws are here to protect us all. Driving is a wonderful privilege but can be very hazardous. These laws minimize the risks and dangers of the road. Protect yourself and other road users. Follow the rules of the road!

Some of the most important laws you will learn during this course deal with "right-of-way". Every interaction you have with other motorists, pedestrians and cyclists while driving is dictated by right-of-way. Whenever your path crosses that of another road user, right-of-way rules will prevent conflict by determining who should go first and who must yield. Without right-of-way laws, a "free-for-all" situation would result in traffic blocks and many more collisions.

Keep in mind that it is always safer to yield in a situation where you are not certain who has right-of-way. Plus, treating other drivers courteously and allowing them to go first helps to keep traffic moving and avoid animosity between road users.

As American road users, we are fortunate to have comprehensive federal traffic rules and law enforcement systems governing public roadway and vehicle use.